



DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, of 101, 4-5, Uenomaru 2-chome, Akashi-shi, Hyogo, Japan, hereby certify that I am well acquainted with the English and Japanese languages, that I am an experienced translator for patent matter, and that the attached document is a true English translation of

Japanese Patent Application No. **11-257196**

that was filed in Japanese.

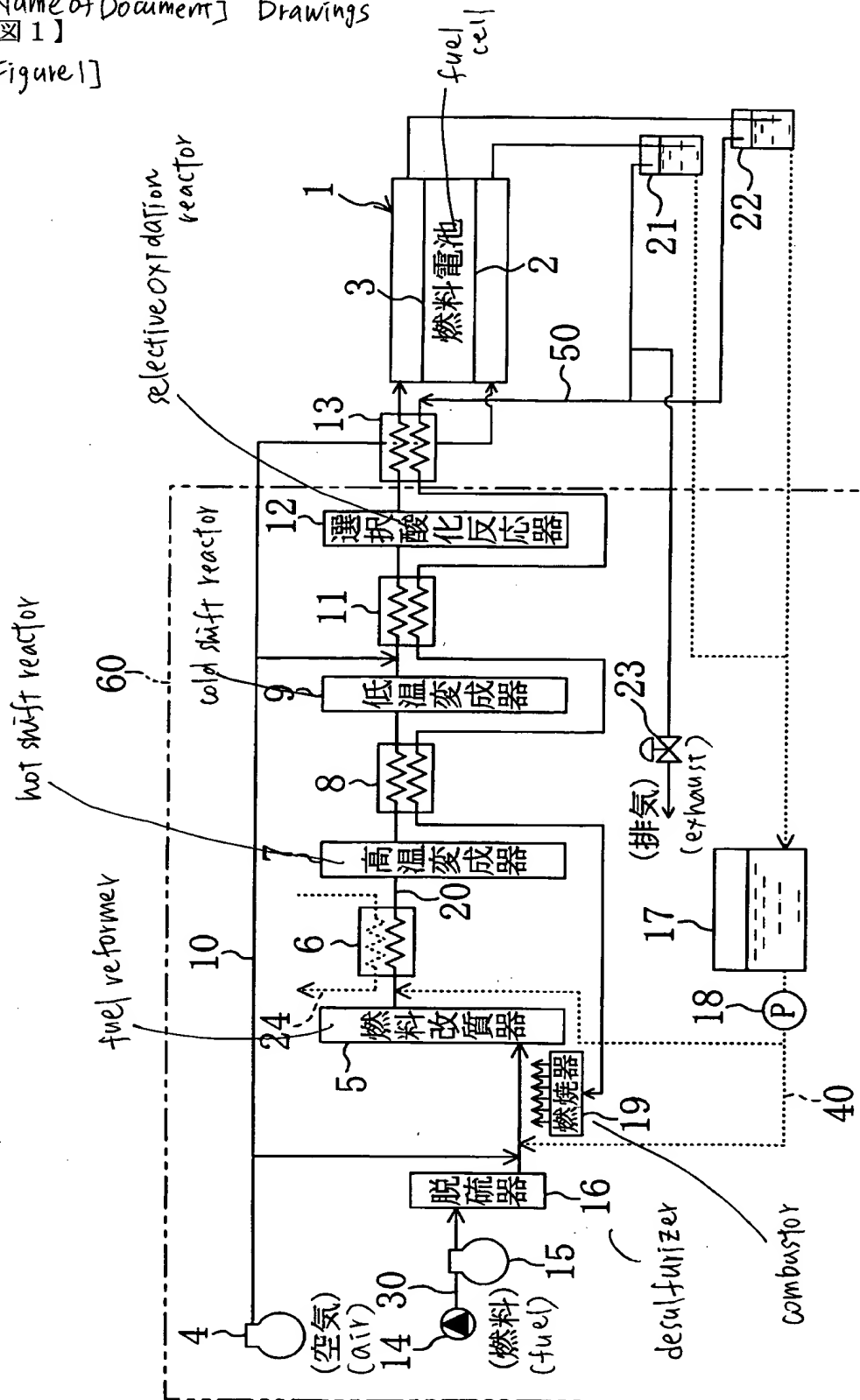
I declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true, that all statements on information and belief are believed to be true, and that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code.

Signature:

Chie Okamoto

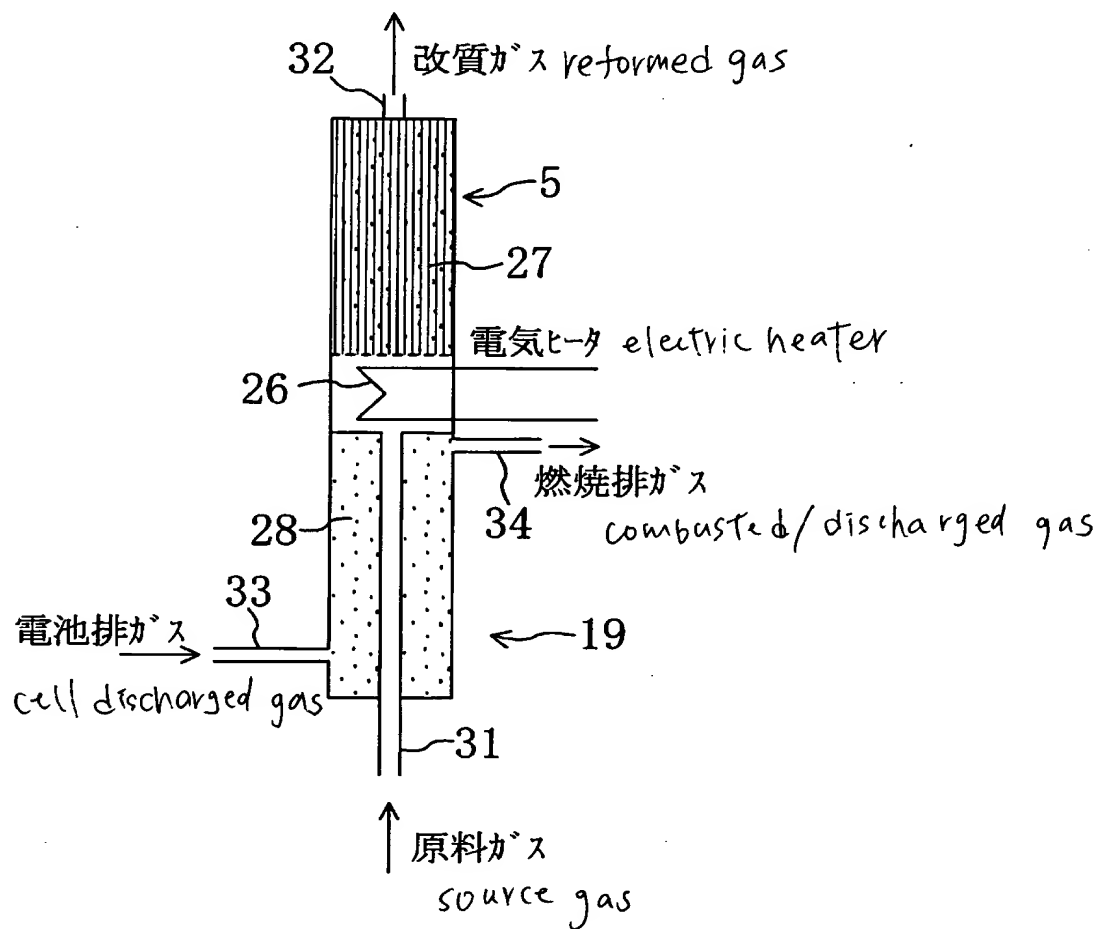
Dated: **December 16, 2004**

【書類名】 図面
【Name of Document】 Drawings
【図1】
【Figure1】

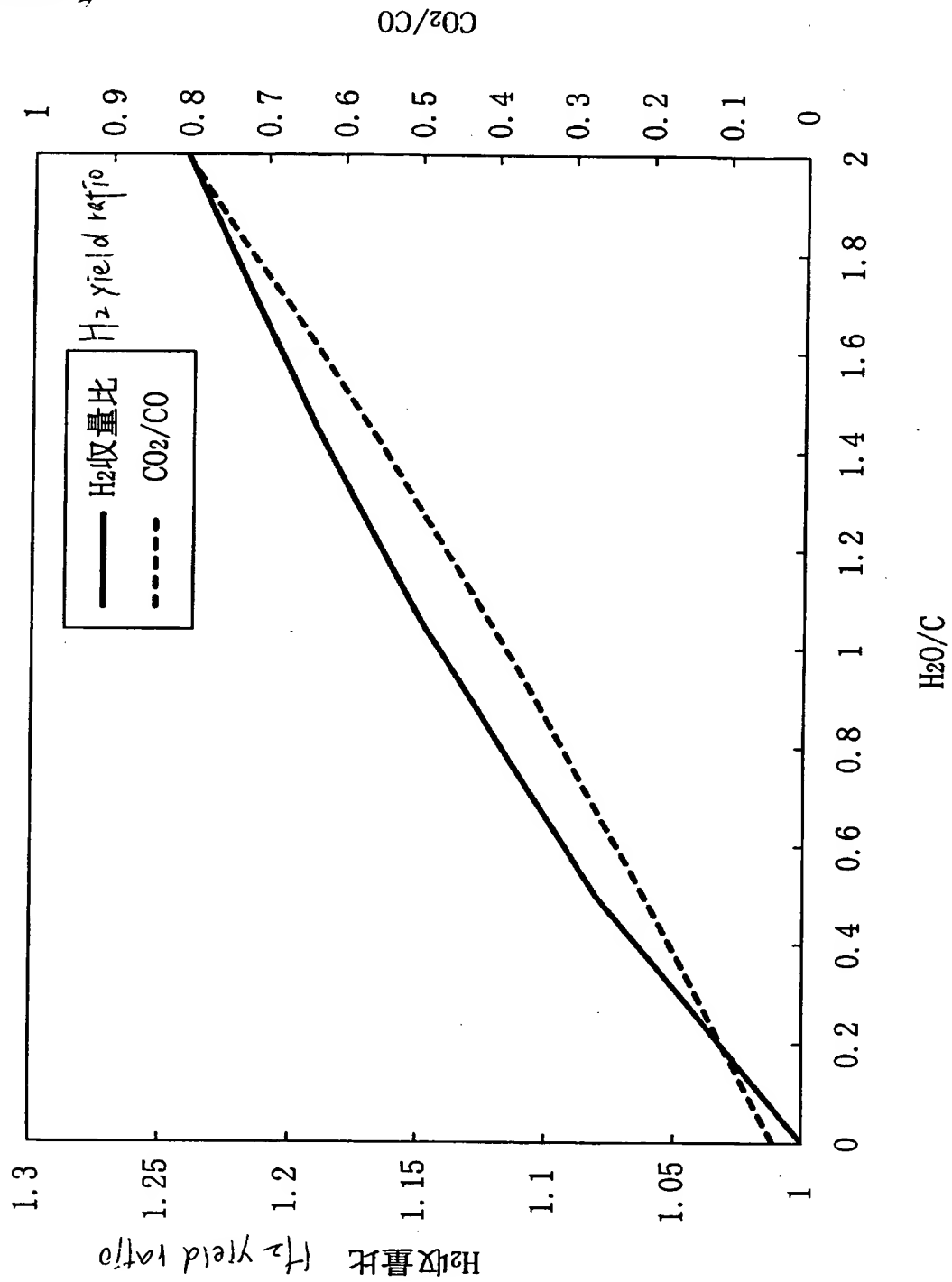


【図2】

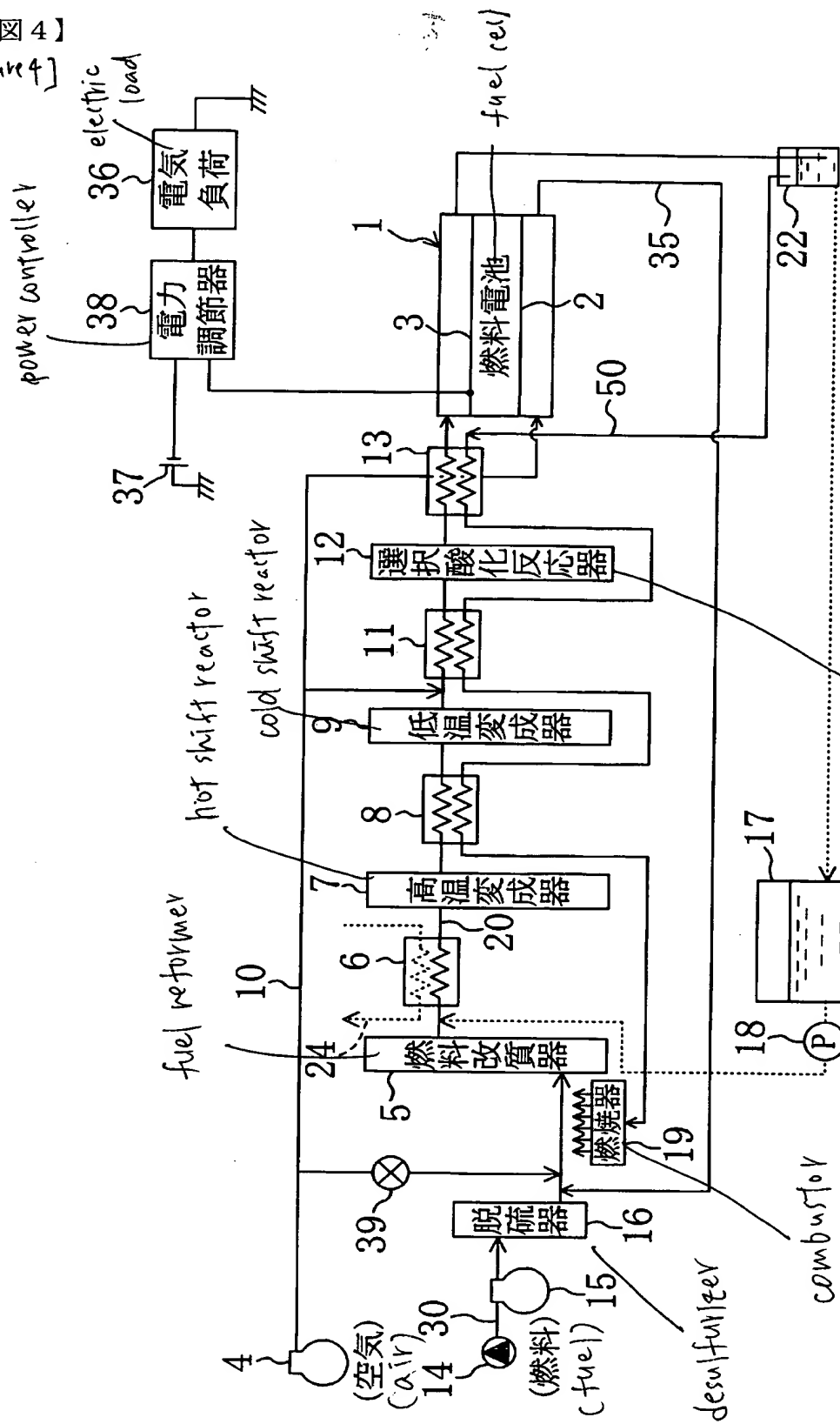
[Figure 2]



【図3】
[Figure3]

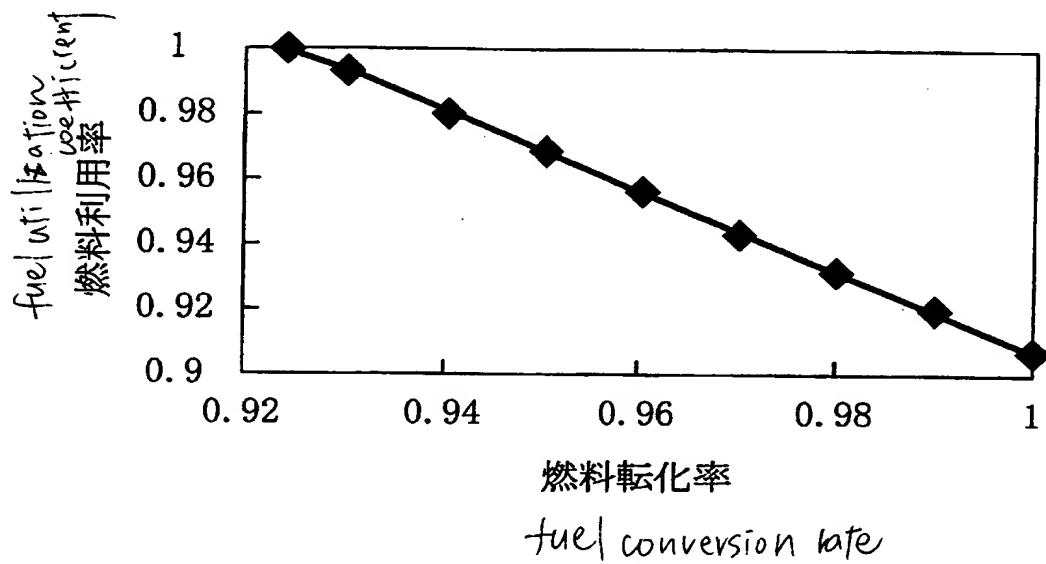


【図4】
[Fig. 4]



selective oxidation reactor

【図5】
[Figure 5]



[Name of the Document] Specification

[Title of the Invention] Hydrogen Gas Generator

[Claims]

[Claim 1] A hydrogen gas generator for generating hydrogen from a source fuel of
5 the hydrocarbon family, oxygen, and steam, said hydrogen gas generator characterized by
comprising

a fuel reformer (5) with a catalyst (27) which exhibits an activity to a partial
oxidation reaction of said source fuel,

wherein the rate at which said source fuel, oxygen, and steam are supplied to said
10 fuel reformer (5) is set in such a manner that the O_2/C ratio, which is the ratio of the
number of moles of said oxygen to the number of moles of carbon of said source fuel, is
not less than 0.9 time the O_2/C theoretical mixture ratio in said partial oxidation reaction,
and that the H_2O/C ratio, which is the ratio of the number of moles of said steam to the
number of moles of carbon of said source fuel, is not less than 0.5, whereby said partial
15 oxidation reaction occurs on said catalyst (27) and a water gas shift reaction in which CO
produced in said partial oxidation reaction is a reactant occurs.

[Claim 2] The hydrogen gas generator of claim 1, characterized in that said water
gas shift reaction is controlled such that the CO_2/CO ratio, which is the ratio of CO_2 to CO
in an outlet gas of said fuel reformer (5), is not less than 0.2.

20 [Claim 3] The hydrogen gas generator of claim 1 or 2, characterized in that said
 H_2O/C ratio is not more than 3.

[Claim 4] The hydrogen gas generator of any one of claims 1 through 3,
characterized in that the outlet gas temperature of said fuel reformer (5) is not more than
800 degrees centigrade.

[Claim 5] The hydrogen gas generator of any one of claims 1 through 4, characterized in that said O_2/C ratio is greater than said O_2/C theoretical mixture ratio in said partial oxidation reaction.

[Claim 6] The hydrogen gas generator of claim 5, characterized in that said O_2/C ratio is not more than 1.5 times said O_2/C theoretical mixture ratio.

[Claim 7] The hydrogen gas generator of any one of claims 1 through 6, characterized in that an active site of said catalyst (27) is formed of at least one of rhodium and ruthenium.

[Detailed Description of the Invention]

10 [Technical Field to which the Invention Belongs]

The present invention relates to a hydrogen gas generator.

[Prior Art]

It is possible to generate hydrogen by reforming hydrocarbon or methanol, and hydrogen gas generators capable of hydrogen generation by such reforming are applicable to fuel cells, hydrogen engines, and the like.

Japanese Patent Gazette No. S58-57361 shows a technique in which either air, air/oxygen, or air/steam is acted on hydrocarbon in the presence of a rhodium catalyst for obtaining hydrogen and CO (carbon monoxide) by partial oxidation. The reaction temperature is from 690 to 900 degrees centigrade. The air and oxygen are used as an oxidant for the hydrocarbon and the steam is used to generate, by steam reforming reaction, hydrogen from a fuel which has been left unoxidized in the oxidation reaction. Accordingly, reactions taking place on a rhodium catalyst when air and steam are acted on hydrocarbon are a partial oxidation reaction and a steam reforming reaction.

Japanese Patent Gazette No. S54-76602 shows a technique in which a free-oxygen-containing gas is acted on hydrocarbon at a temperature in the range of 815 to 1930

degrees centigrade and under an absolute atmospheric pressure in the range of 1 to 250 ata for generating hydrogen and CO by partial oxidation and, in addition, steam is added for the preheating, dispersion, and transfer of a temperature moderator and hydrocarbon fuel.

Japanese Patent Gazette No. H06-92603 shows a technique in which hydrocarbon, oxygen-containing gas, and steam are subjected, under a pressure in the range of 2 to 100 bars and at a temperature in the range of 750 to 1200 degrees centigrade (preferably, in the range of 1000 to 1200 degrees centigrade), to a partial oxidation reaction in the presence of a catalyst for generating hydrogen and CO.

Japanese Patent Gazette No. H07-57756 shows a hydrogen gas generator having a fuel reformer in which steam is acted on hydrocarbon in the presence of a catalyst for generating hydrogen and CO by steam reforming reaction. Oxygen is introduced into the fuel reformer to cause, at the same time, a partial oxidation reaction of the hydrocarbon to take place. Since the steam reformation reaction is endothermic, this compensates for the heat necessary for the steam reformation reaction by making utilization of the partial oxidation reaction which is exothermic.

Japanese Patent Gazette No. H10-308230 shows a fuel cell electricity generation apparatus comprising a fuel reformer for reforming hydrocarbon into hydrogen by partial oxidation reaction in the presence of a catalyst, a CO shift reactor for causing CO produced in the reforming process to undergo oxidation by a water gas shift reaction, and a selective oxidization device for subjecting the remaining CO to selective oxidization. This prior art further shows that in addition to the catalyst exhibiting an activity to the partial oxidation reaction, the fuel reformer is filled with another catalyst exhibiting an activity to a steam reforming reaction of the hydrocarbon. Hydrocarbon, oxygen, and steam are supplied to the reformer to produce hydrogen by the partial oxidation reaction of the hydrocarbon and the steam reforming reaction.

[Problems that the Invention is to solve]

As described above, when performing the reforming of hydrocarbon into hydrogen by partial oxidation reaction, it has been known that oxygen and steam are acted on the hydrocarbon in the presence of a catalyst. The steam is added for obtaining a steam dissolving reaction or a steam reforming reaction which is endothermic or for controlling the temperature or the like. This requires that an external heating means with a large heat transfer area be provided in the fuel reformer in order to maintain the reforming reaction. Moreover, relatively large amount of CO is generated by the hydrocarbon partial oxidation reaction and the steam reforming reaction. Accordingly, when the presence of CO may be a problem, a large-size shift reactor is required for the oxidation removal of CO.

As stated in the foregoing patent gazettes (H07-57756 and H10-308230), with a view to eliminating the need for an external heating means, there is a concept that an absorption of heat by the steam reforming reaction is compensated for by a liberation of heat by the partial oxidation reaction. However, for the case of methane, the heat of reaction of the steam reforming reaction is about 205 kJ/mol (heat absorption), whereas the heat of reaction of the partial oxidation reaction is only about 36 kJ/mol, and the difference in heat quantity is large. Accordingly, it is practically difficult to eliminate the need for an external heating means by just employing the concept that steam is added for the purpose of mainly causing a steam reforming reaction to take place.

Accordingly, an object of the present invention is to reduce the external heat quantity required for maintaining the fuel reforming reaction and to further reduce it to zero.

Furthermore, another object of the present invention is to reduce the amount of CO that is produced by the reforming of fuel and thereby to reduce the load of a CO shift reactor.

[Means for Solving the Problems]

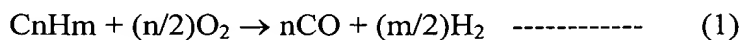
In order to accomplish these objects, in the present invention, partial oxidation and water gas shift reactions are proceeded successively.

The present invention provides a hydrogen gas generator for generating hydrogen from a source fuel of the hydrocarbon family, oxygen, and steam, which is characterized by including

a fuel reformer (5) which is provided with a catalyst which exhibits an activity to a partial oxidation reaction of the source fuel,

wherein the rate at which said source fuel, oxygen, and steam are supplied to said fuel reformer (5) is set in such a manner that the O_2/C ratio, which is the ratio of the number of moles of said oxygen to the number of moles of carbon of said source fuel, is not less than 0.9 time the O_2/C theoretical mixture ratio in said partial oxidation reaction, and that the H_2O/C ratio, which is the ratio of the number of moles of said steam to the number of moles of carbon of said source fuel, is not less than 0.5, whereby said partial oxidation reaction occurs on said catalyst (27) and a water gas shift reaction in which CO produced in said partial oxidation reaction is a reactant occurs.

The above successive reactions are expressed as follows.



The reaction equation (1) is for the partial oxidation reaction. Target hydrogen can be obtained by this reaction, and CO that is produced simultaneously with the hydrogen is oxidized by the water gas shift reaction expressed by the reaction equation (2) and hydrogen is also generated during the water gas shift reaction. The addition of steam to the source gas does not much affect the fuel conversion rate in the partial oxidation reaction of the reaction equation (1), but the steam addition makes it easy for the water gas shift

reaction of the reaction equation (2) to take place (because the equilibrium inclines toward the generation side), thereby increasing the yield of hydrogen.

The partial oxidation reaction of the reaction equation (1) is an exothermic reaction, and when the source fuel C_nH_m is methane (CH_4), $\Delta H = -36.07$ kJ/mol. The water gas shift reaction of the reaction equation (2) is also an exothermic reaction, and $\Delta H = -41.12$ kJ/mol. Accordingly, either the fuel reformer (5) or the source gas (source fuel, oxygen or air, and steam) must be heated up to a certain temperature in order to initiate a reforming reaction. However, once the reaction starts, an amount of heat necessary for maintaining the reaction can be obtained from the reaction heat. This reduces the amount of external heating, therefore making it possible to eliminate the need for external heating.

Further, since the CO produced in the partial oxidation reaction of the reaction equation (1) is oxidized by the water gas shift reaction of the reaction equation (2), this reduces the CO concentration of the reformed gas supplied to a CO shift reactor (which oxidizes CO by the water gas shift reaction) from the fuel reformer (5). Accordingly, the CO shift reactor and a CO selective oxidation reactor can have their loads reduced and thus can have their sizes reduced.

The reason why the O_2/C ratio is set so as not to be less than 0.9 time the O_2/C theoretical mixture ratio in the partial oxidation reaction is that even when the flow rate (space velocity) of the source gas that is supplied to the fuel reformer (5) is high, it is possible to provide a high fuel conversion rate (reforming rate).

As can be seen obviously from the reaction equation (1), the O_2/C theoretical mixture ratio in the partial oxidation reaction is 0.5. Therefore, the O_2/C ratio is not less than 0.45.

If the lower limit of the ratio is set to fall below the theoretical mixture ratio, there is the possibility that a part of the source fuel undergoes a steam reforming reaction.

However, the percentage thereof is slight, and thus that the thermal effect (the temperature drop) on the main reaction (the partial oxidation reaction) is negligible.

Suppressing the occurrence of such a steam reforming reaction as much as possible can be achieved just by making the O_2/C ratio greater than the theoretical mixture ratio, i.e., 0.5. However, if the O_2/C ratio is increased excessively, the complete oxidation reaction is likely to occur, leading to the drop in the yield of hydrogen. Therefore, the upper limit of the O_2/C ratio is preferably 1.5 times the O_2/C theoretical mixture ratio, i.e., about 0.75.

The reason why the H_2O/C ratio is set to 0.5 or more is to proceed the water gas shift reaction. That is, in the present invention, the addition of steam is for the water gas shift reaction, and if the H_2O/C ratio increases, this causes the water gas shift reaction to efficiently proceed. If the ratio is less than 0.5, then the water gas shift reaction will not be proceeded sufficiently. As a result, the CO concentration of a gas obtained increases and the down-sizing of the CO shift reactor cannot be achieved. Furthermore, the hydrogen yield is not improved.

Further, by setting the H_2O/C ratio to 0.5 or more, the CO concentration of the reformed gas is positively reduced by the water gas shift reaction. Thus, when a CO shift reactor is provided for reducing the CO concentration of the reformed gas, the temperature of the CO shift reactor can be prevented from becoming excessively high. In other words, when the concentration of CO in the reformed gas is high, the CO shift reactor undergoes an excessive increase in its temperature by the water gas shift reaction there (for example, the shift reactor temperature becomes higher than the shift reactor inlet gas temperature by 100 K or more). This may result in catalyst sintering or early-stage degradation. However, such is prevented.

It is preferable that the H_2O/C ratio be not more than 3. Increasing the H_2O/C ratio, i.e., increasing the amount of steam, provides the advantage that the water gas shift

reaction is promoted. However, an increase in the steam amount requires a large amount of heat corresponding to that increase, therefore resulting in the drop in energy efficiency. Accordingly, the H_2O/C ratio is set to 3 or less.

It is preferable that the water gas shift reaction is controlled such that the CO_2/CO ratio, which is the ratio of CO_2 to CO in an outlet gas of the fuel reformer (5), is not less than 0.2. This makes it possible to achieve an increased hydrogen yield.

The above point will be made clearer in the description of the following embodiments of the present invention. The fact that the CO_2/CO ratio is high means that the water gas shift reaction is proceeding, whereby hydrogen is produced.

It is preferable that the outlet gas temperature of the fuel reformer (5) be not more than 800 degrees centigrade. As stated above, both the partial oxidation reaction and the water gas shift reaction are an exothermic reaction. Therefore, unlike the steam reforming reaction which is an endothermic reaction, if the reaction temperature becomes excessively high, this provides disadvantages in the reaction proceeding. It is therefore preferable that the lower limit of the outlet gas temperature be about 450 degrees centigrade. The reason is that if the outlet gas temperature falls below such a lower limit, this makes the partial oxidation reaction and the water gas shift reaction difficult to proceed.

As the source fuel of the hydrocarbon family, it is possible to employ propane, natural gas (including LNG), naphtha, kerosene, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), and city gas, in addition to methane.

As a catalyst metal of the catalyst (27) exhibiting an activity to the partial oxidation reaction, rhodium and ruthenium are preferable. These catalyst metals may be supported on a carrier (support) in the form of a metal simple substance, in the form of an alloy, or in the form of a compound (for example, an oxide). Further, catalyst metals of two or more kinds (for example, rhodium and ruthenium) may be supported on the same carrier.

Alternatively, a mixture of catalyst metals of two or more kinds supported on respective carriers may be applicable.

As the carrier, inorganic porous materials whose specific surface area is large are preferable, such as an alumina.

5 The fuel reformer (5) can be filled with the catalyst (27) of the carrier carrying thereon a catalyst metal, in the form of a pellet, or the catalyst (27) may be supported on a monolith carrier by a binder (for example, a honeycomb monolith carrier).

As described above, in the fuel reformer (5), a gas, whose CO concentration is low, can be obtained. However, in order to further reduce the CO concentration, at least one of
10 a CO hot shift reactor, a CO cold shift reactor, and a CO partial oxidation reactor may be provided.

[Effects of the Invention]

As described above, according to this invention, a fuel reformer (5) is provided with a catalyst (27) which exhibits an activity to a partial oxidation reaction of a source
15 fuel of the hydrocarbon family, and the O_2/C ratio of a source gas is not less than 0.9 time the O_2/C theoretical mixture ratio in said partial oxidation reaction, and the H_2O/C ratio of the source gas is not less than 0.5, whereby a water gas shift reaction in which CO produced in said partial oxidation reaction is a reactant occurs. Thus, the yield of hydrogen is improved by the partial oxidation reaction and the water gas shift reaction, and
20 it is possible to downsize an external heating means for maintaining a fuel-reforming reaction or to omit such external heating means. Furthermore, since the CO concentration of a reformed gas is reduced, a subsequent treatment for further reducing the CO concentration is easily performed and devices used in such treatment can also have their sizes reduced.

Also, if the water gas shift reaction is controlled such that the CO_2/CO ratio in an outlet gas of the fuel reformer (5) is not less than 0.2, the yield of hydrogen is advantageously improved.

Moreover, if the temperature of the outlet gas of the fuel reformer (5) is not more than 800 degrees centigrade, the partial oxidation reaction and the water gas shift reaction proceed more efficiently.

In addition, if the upper limit of the $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{C}$ ratio is 3.0, energy loss can be reduced. If the O_2/C ratio is 1.5 times the O_2/C theoretical mixture ratio or less, it is possible to advantageously prevent the complete combustion of the source fuel and maintain the fuel-reforming efficiency at a high level.

If a catalyst containing rhodium or ruthenium is used as the catalyst (27) of the fuel reformer (5), the partial oxidation reaction can be advantageously proceeded.

[Embodiments of the Invention]

Hereinafter, embodiments of the present invention will be described with reference to the accompanying drawings. In this embodiment, a hydrogen gas generator according to the present invention is adapted to a fuel cell system.

(Description of entire fuel cell system)

Figure 1 shows a configuration of the fuel cell system of the present invention, in which the reference numeral 1 denotes a fuel cell of a solid polyelectrolyte type having an oxygen electrode (cathode) 2 which is a catalyst electrode and a hydrogen electrode (anode) 3 which is also a catalyst electrode. An air compressor 4 is connected to the oxygen electrode 2 by an air supply pipe 10. A fuel reformer 5 is connected to the hydrogen electrode 3 by a reformed gas supply pipe 20. In the reformed gas supply pipe 20 are a first heat exchanger 6, a CO hot shift reactor 7, a second heat exchanger 8, a CO cold shift reactor 9, a third heat exchanger 11, a CO selective oxidation reactor 12, and a

fourth heat exchanger **13** which are disposed in that order in the direction toward the fuel cell **1**.

A source gas supply pipe **30** establishes connection between the fuel reformer **5** and a source fuel supply (city gas) **14**. A gas compressor **15** and a desulfurizer **16** are disposed in the source gas supply pipe **30** in that order in the direction toward the fuel reformer **5**. Moreover, a pipe, branching off from the air supply pipe **10**, is connected to the fuel reformer **5** so that air for a partial oxidation reaction is supplied from the air compressor **4** to the fuel reformer **5**, and the fuel reformer **5** and a water tank **17** are connected together by a supply pipe **40** so that water for obtaining steam for a water gas shift reaction is supplied, in an atomized form, to the fuel reformer **5**. Disposed in the water supply pipe **40** is a pump **18**.

A source fuel, air and steam are heated by the combustor **19** and supplied to the fuel reformer **5** from the source fuel supply **14**, air compressor **4**, and water tank **17**, respectively. Further, connected to a portion of the reformed gas supply pipe **20** located upstream of the first heat exchanger **6** is a pipe which branches off from the water supply pipe **40** for a supply of water in an atomized form to obtain steam for the water gas shift reaction. Connected to a portion of the reformed gas supply pipe **20** located upstream of the third heat exchanger **11** is a pipe which branches off from the air supply pipe **10** for a supply of air for the selective oxidation reactor **12**.

In the above, the air compressor **4**, the fuel reformer **5**, the CO hot shift reactor **7**, the CO cold shift reactor **9**, the selective oxidation reactor **12**, the heat exchangers **6**, **8** and **11**, the source fuel supply **14**, the gas compressor **15**, the desulfurizer **16**, the water tank **17**, the pump **18**, the combustor **19**, and the pipes **10**, **20**, **30** and **40** together form a hydrogen gas generator **60** according to the present invention.

It is arranged such that discharged gases from the oxygen and hydrogen electrodes 2 and 3 of the fuel cell 1 are passed through steam separators 21 and 22. Thereafter, these gases are merged together and supplied, through a gas pipe 50, to the combustor 19 as a gas for combustion. The discharged gas of the oxygen electrode 2 can be suitably vented by a valve 23 to atmosphere. The gas pipe 50 is so laid out as to pass through the fourth heat exchanger 13, through the third heat exchanger 11, and through the second heat exchanger 8 in that order, and the discharged gas is heated by heat exchange with the reformed gas in each heat exchanger and supplied to the combustor 19. Accordingly, the reformed gas is, on the contrary, cooled in each heat exchanger and supplied to the fuel cell 1. Another cooled water pipe 24 passes through the first heat exchanger 6 and the reformed gas is cooled by heat exchange with the cooled water flowing through the cooled water pipe 24.

The fuel reformer 5 is filled with a catalyst (which is formed of Al_2O_3 carrying thereon either Ru or Rh) that exhibits an activity to a partial oxidation reaction. The CO hot shift reactor 7 is filled with a catalyst, such as Fe_2O_3 and Cr_2O_3 , that exhibits an activity to a water gas shift reaction at high temperatures (400 degrees centigrade or thereabouts). The CO cold shift reactor 9 is filled with a catalyst, such as CuO and ZnO, that exhibits an activity to a water gas shift reaction at low temperatures (180 degrees centigrade or thereabouts). The CO selective oxidation reactor 12 is filled with a catalyst (which is formed of Al_2O_3 or zeolite carrying thereon Ru or Pt) that exhibits an activity to a selective oxidation reaction. The combustor 19 is filled with a combustion catalyst. Furthermore, the fuel reformer 5 is provided with an electric heater for pre-heating.

Figure 2 shows a reactor 25, which is an integration of the fuel reformer 5 and the combustor 19. In the reactor 25 of Figure 2, an electric heater 26 is incorporated between the upper-side fuel reformer 5 and the lower-side combustion 19. A site of the fuel

reformer **5** is filled with a honeycomb catalyst **27** of a honeycomb monolith carrier carrying thereon a catalyst. A site of the combustor **19** is filled with a combustion catalyst **28**, and a source gas passage **29** extends from a source gas inlet **31** at the lower end to where the electric heater is disposed, passing through the catalyst-filled site of the combustor **19**. Moreover, in Figure 2, the reference numeral **32** denotes a reformed gas outlet, the reference numeral **33** denotes an inlet of the discharged gas from the fuel cell **1**, and the reference numeral **34** denotes a combusted/discharged gas outlet.

In the above-described fuel cell system, since the temperature of the fuel reformer **5** is low when the system is started, the electric heater is operated until the temperature is increased to such an extent that the catalyst becomes active, for example, about 460 degrees centigrade. After the system is started, the electric heater is turned off, and a source gas (source fuel and a mixed gas of air and steam) is pre-heated only in the combustor **19**. The source gas is controlled such that the H_2O/C ratio ranges between 0.5 to 3 and the O_2/C ratio ranges between 0.45 and 0.75, by controlling the supply amount of source fuel, air, and steam. The outlet gas temperature of the fuel reformer **5** is separately controlled so as not to go beyond 800 degrees centigrade. A most preferable operating condition is as follows. That is, the H_2O/C ratio is 1.0, the O_2/C ratio is from 0.52 to 0.60 (more preferably, 0.56), the outlet gas temperature of the fuel reformer **5** is 720 degrees centigrade, and the CO_2/CO ratio of the outlet gas of the fuel reformer **5** is 0.4.

After desulfurization, the source fuel is heated together with air and atomized water, by the electric heater or the combustor **19** and supplied to the catalyst of the fuel reformer **5**. The atomized water is changed to steam by such heating. A partial oxidation reaction of the source fuel occurs on the catalyst of the fuel reformer **5**, thereby producing hydrogen and CO (see Formula (1)). Since there exists steam in the inside of the fuel reformer **5**, this

causes, at the same time, a water gas shift reaction to take place. As a result, hydrogen and carbon dioxide are generated, and the CO concentration is reduced (see Formula (2)).

Leaving the fuel reformer **5**, the reformed gas is cooled down to about 400 degrees centigrade in the first heat exchanger **6** and delivered to the CO hot shift reactor **7** where the CO concentration is further reduced by a water gas shift reaction taking place on the catalyst of the shift reactor **7**. Then, leaving the CO hot shift reactor **7**, the reformed gas is further cooled down to about 180 degrees centigrade in the second heat exchanger **8** and supplied to the CO cold shift reactor **9** where the CO concentration is further reduced by a water gas shift reaction taking place on the catalyst of the shift reactor **9**. Then, leaving the CO cold shift reactor **9**, the reformed gas is cooled down to about 140 degrees centigrade in the third heat exchanger **11** and supplied to the CO selective oxidation reactor **12** where the CO concentration is further reduced by a water gas shift reaction taking place on the catalyst of the reactor **12**. Leaving the CO selective oxidation reactor **12**, the reformed gas is cooled down to about 80 degrees centigrade in the fourth heat exchanger **13** and supplied to the hydrogen electrode **3** of the fuel cell **1**.

In the fuel cell **1**, a cell reaction of $2\text{H}_2 \rightarrow 4\text{H}^+ + 4\text{e}^-$ occurs at the surface of the hydrogen electrode **3** and a cell reaction of $\text{O}_2 + 4\text{H}^+ + 4\text{e}^- \rightarrow 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ occurs at the surface of the oxygen electrode **2**. Therefore, a discharged gas from the oxygen electrode **2** contains therein residual air that has not been used in the cell reaction and steam produced by the cell reaction. On the other hand, contained in a discharged gas from the hydrogen electrode **3** are hydrogen that has not been used in the cell reaction, non-reformed source fuel, air, and steam.

The discharged gases of the oxygen and hydrogen electrodes **2** and **3** pass through the steam separators **21** and **22** and are merged together. Thereafter, the discharged gas thus merged is heated by heat exchange in the fourth, third and second heat exchangers **13**,

11, and 8 and delivered to the combustor 19. The discharged gas contains hydrogen and oxygen which undergo a reaction by the action of the combustion catalyst in the combustor 19, and the resulting reaction heat becomes a preheating supply for the source gas. On the other hand, the non-reformed source material contained in the discharged gas is burned at the same time to become a preheating supply.

(Relationship between H_2O/C ratio, CO_2/CO ratio, and hydrogen yield ratio)

Referring to Figure 3, there is shown a relationship between the H_2O/C ratio of a source gas that is introduced into the fuel reformer 5 (i.e., the ratio of the number of moles of steam to the number of moles of carbon in the source fuel), the CO_2/CO ratio of a reformed gas from the fuel reformer 5 (i.e., the ratio of CO_2 to CO in a reformer outlet gas), and the hydrogen yield ratio by the fuel reformer 5 (i.e., the ratio in which the hydrogen yield is 1 when H_2O/C ratio = 0.5). The operation conditions of the fuel reformer 5 are as follows. The inlet gas temperature is 460 degrees centigrade. The O_2/C ratio (i.e., the ratio of the number of moles of oxygen to the number of moles of carbon of the source fuel) is 0.56. The gas pressure is 150 kPa.

According to Figure 3, as the H_2/C ratio increases, the CO_2/CO ratio likewise increases. The fact that the CO_2/CO ratio is great means that CO changes to CO_2 in the fuel reformer 5. This change is attributed to the complete oxidation reaction of the source fuel as well as to the water gas shift reaction of CO . It is proved that the addition of steam makes it possible to cause the water gas shift reaction to efficiently proceed in the fuel reformer 5, for it is not conceivable that the increase in the H_2/CO ratio (i.e., the increase in the amount of steam) makes the complete oxidation reaction easy to proceed.

Figure 3 shows that the hydrogen yield increases if the H_2/C ratio is not less than 0.5. In order to obtain the increase in the hydrogen yield, the water gas shift reaction in the fuel reformer 5 is so controlled as to increase the CO_2/CO ratio above 0.2. In other words, the

hydrogen yield can be increased by controlling the source gas composition, the reaction temperature or others.

(Effect of the type of the catalyst of the fuel reformer on the reformed gas composition)

Referring to Table 1, there is shown a relationship between the inlet gas composition (the source gas composition) and the outlet gas composition (the reformed gas composition) of the fuel reformer 5 when fuel reforming was carried out employing different catalysts for use in the fuel reformer 5. Three types of catalysts, i.e., Ni-Al₂O₃ (formed of Al₂O₃ carrying thereon Ni), Rh-Al₂O₃ (formed of Al₂O₃ carrying thereon Rh), and Ru-Al₂O₃ (formed of Al₂O₃ carrying thereon Ru), were used.

TABLE 1

CATALYST TYPE	GAS	INLET COMPOSITION	OUTLET COMPOSITION
Ni-Al₂O₃	H ₂	-	0.3071
	N ₂	0.4637	0.4728
	CH ₄	0.2200	0.0549
	CO	-	0.1063
	CO ₂	-	0.0590
	O ₂	0.1233	-
	H ₂ O	0.1931	-
	SV(h ⁻¹)	143000	-
Rh-Al₂O₃	H ₂	-	0.3704
	N ₂	0.4638	0.4301
	CH ₄	0.2199	0.0168
	CO	-	0.1261
	CO ₂	-	0.0566
	O ₂	0.1233	-
	H ₂ O	0.1930	-
	SV(h ⁻¹)	143000	-
Ru-Al₂O₃	H ₂	-	0.3649
	N ₂	0.4638	0.4330
	CH ₄	0.2199	0.0215
	CO	-	0.1211
	CO ₂	-	0.0596
	O ₂	0.1233	-
	H ₂ O	0.1930	-
	SV(h ⁻¹)	143000	-

As can be seen from Table 1, for the case of the Rh-Al₂O₃ catalyst and the Ru-Al₂O₃ catalyst, the rate of conversion of methane into hydrogen is high, whereas for the case of the Ni-Al₂O₃ catalyst the conversion rate is low. From this, it is preferable to employ in the fuel reformer 5 either the Rh-Al₂O₃ catalyst or the Ru-Al₂O₃ catalyst.

5 (Effect of the H₂O/C ratio on the reformed gas composition in the Rh-Al₂O₃ catalyst)

Table 2 shows a relationship between the inlet gas composition (the source gas composition) and the outlet gas composition (the reformed gas composition) of the fuel reformer 5 when the Rh-Al₂O₃ catalyst was employed in the fuel reformer 5, and fuel
10 reforming was carried out at different H₂O/C ratios.

Table 2

CATALYST TYPE	GAS	INLET COMPOSITION	OUTLET COMPOSITION
Rh-Al ₂ O ₃	H ₂	-	0.3913
	N ₂	0.4637	0.4161
	CH ₄	0.2199	0.0086
	CO	-	0.1175
	CO ₂	-	0.0665
	O ₂	0.1233	-
	H ₂ O	0.1931	-
	SV(h ⁻¹)	29000	-

	H ₂	0.4121
	N ₂	-	0.4029
	CH ₄	0.3758	0.0073
	CO	0.1781	0.0805
	CO ₂	-	0.0973
	O ₂	-	-
	H ₂ O	0.0999	-
	SV(h ⁻¹)	0.3462	-
		29000	

As can be seen from Table 2, as the H_2O/C ratio increases, the CO_2/CO ratio increases and the hydrogen yield also increases. This agrees with the results shown in Figure 3.

(Another embodiment of the fuel cell system)

5 Figure 4 shows another embodiment of the fuel cell system. The present fuel cell system differs from the first fuel cell system. First, instead of introducing to the fuel reformer 5 air from the air compressor 4 and water from the water tank 17, the discharged gas of the oxygen electrode 2 is supplied through a supply pipe 35 to the fuel reformer 5. Second, another power supply 37 and the fuel cell 1 are connected in parallel to an electric
10 load 36 and a power controller 38 for controlling the output current value of the fuel cell 1 is disposed. Finally, a flow rate control valve 39 is disposed in a branch pipe extendedly arranged from the air supply pipe 10 toward the source gas supply pipe 30 to form an air supply means.

As described above, the discharged gas of the oxygen electrode 2 contains steam
15 and unused air. The discharged gas is therefore used as a gas for reforming a source fuel in the fuel reformer 5 and the power controller 38 is disposed to make the composition of the discharged gas suitable for the fuel reforming. By controlling the output current value of the fuel cell 1 with the power controller 38, the coefficient of utilization of hydrogen and air of the fuel cell 1 varies and, as a result, the oxygen concentration and the steam
20 concentration of the discharged gas of the oxygen electrode 2 vary. The lack of electric power resulting from such control is supplemented by the power supply 37.

If the coefficient of utilization of hydrogen is 100% when the amount of hydrogen used in the fuel cell 1 is 1L/min (0 °C and 1 atmospheric pressure), then the output current value A at that time is theoretically as follows.

25
$$A = 2 \text{ nF}$$

= 143 (ampere)

(A: C(coulomb)/sec; n: mole/sec; and F: Faraday constant)

Accordingly, if the output current value is decreased below the above theoretical value, then both the hydrogen utilization coefficient (the fuel utilization coefficient) and the air utilization coefficient decrease. In that case, the air utilization coefficient is so controlled to fall in the range, for example, between 0.4 and 0.75.

Further, the lack of air when the air utilization coefficient is increased is supplemented by introducing air from the air compressor 4 by the flow rate control valve 39.

10 (Relationship between fuel utilization coefficient and fuel conversion rate)

Figure 5 is a graph showing a relationship between the fuel utilization coefficient of the fuel cell 1 and the fuel conversion rate of the fuel reformer 5 at which the energy efficiency reaches a maximum in a fuel cell system which uses a source fuel which has not been reformed and a hydrogen which has not been used of the source fuel supplied from the source fuel supply 14 for fuel gas preheating.

For example, when the fuel conversion rate is 0.94, the fuel utilization coefficient, at which the energy efficiency reaches a maximum, is 0.98. In this example, 6% of the source fuel that has been remained unreformed and 2% of the hydrogen in the reformed gas that has been remained unused in the cell reaction were utilized for source gas preheating.

In each of the embodiments of the present invention, the combustor 19 is provided, wherein the discharged gas of the fuel cell 1 is utilized for source gas preheating. An arrangement may be made in which the provision of the combustor 19 is omitted and the discharged gas is burned in the catalyst to provide another heat supply. The reason is that since both the partial oxidation reaction and the water gas shift reaction occurring in the

fuel reformer 5 are exothermic, the reaction temperature is maintained by the exothermic reaction heat after the fuel reformer 5 is heated up to the reaction temperature by the electric heater at the start.

[Brief Explanation of the Drawings]

5 [Figure 1]

A diagram showing a configuration of a fuel cell system according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[Figure 2]

10 A cross sectional view showing structures of a fuel reformer and a combustor of the fuel cell system.

[Figure 3]

A graph showing a relationship between the H_2O/C ratio of a source gas, the CO_2/CO ratio of a reformed gas, and the hydrogen yield ratio.

[Figure 4]

15 A diagram showing a configuration of a fuel cell system according to another embodiment of the present invention.

[Figure 5] A graph showing a relationship between the fuel utilization coefficient and the fuel conversion rate at which the energy efficiency of the fuel cell system reaches a maximum.

20 [Explanation of the Reference Characters]

1: FUEL CELL

2: OXYGEN ELECTRODE

3: HYDROGEN ELECTRODE

4: AIR COMPRESSOR (AIR SUPPLY)

25 5: FUEL REFORMER

7: CO HOT SHIFT REACTOR

14: WATER TANK (STEAM SUPPLY)

27: CATALYST

**35: DISCHARGED GAS SUPPLY PIPE (DISCHARGED GAS SUPPLY
5 MEANS)**

38: POWER CONTROLLER (OUTPUT CURRENT CONTROL MEANS)

39: FLOW RATE CONTROL VALVE (AIR SUPPLY MEANS)

40: WATER SUPPLY PIPE (STEAM SUPPLY MEANS)

60: HYDROGEN GAS GENERATOR

10

[Name of the Document] Abstract

[Abstract]

[Purpose] To reduce a CO concentration in a reformed gas in a fuel reformer and make an external heating means for maintaining a reforming reaction unnecessary.

- 5 [Solution] A fuel reformer **5** is provided with a catalyst which exhibits an activity to a partial oxidation reaction of a source fuel and steam is supplied to the reformer **5** so that the partial oxidation reaction and a water gas shift reaction occur in the fuel reformer **5**.

[Selected Figure] Figure 1